

### **REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Claims 1-16 are pending. Claims 1-7, 15 and 16 have been rejected and claims 8-14 have been objected to. Claims 1-16 have not been changed from the previous amendment. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

#### **Objections to the Drawings**

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to Fig. 1A, requiring that Fig. 1A be labeled "Prior Art." The Examiner further objected to Fig. 8 in that Fig. 8 refers to two figures, Fig. 8A and Fig. 8B. Applicants have amended Fig. 1A and Fig. 8 accordingly. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

#### **Objections to the Specification**

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to the Abstract because it contains legal phraseology that typically appears in the claims. Applicants have amended the Abstract accordingly. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

#### **Claim Rejections**

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-7 and 15-16 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Maloberti (US4906137). Applicants respectfully traverse.

Claim 1 is a method for starting up a flowline (16) that extends over the seabed (12) between a wellhead (10) and a joint end (17). The joint end is suitable for connecting the flowline (16) to a subsea riser (18). The method includes the steps of inducing elongation of the flowline (16) and a subsequently fixing the joint end (17) to the seabed (12) to maintain the flowline (16) in the elongated position. Applicants submit that Maloberti does not teach these features.

The Examiner asserts that Maloberti discloses these features with reference to the hose (3) of Figs. 1-4 and at col. 1, line 67-col.2, line 2. Applicants respectfully disagree. Maloberti's reference (3) is a continuous hose that extends from a surface support (1) to a wellhead (2). The hose has a number of parts, including part (3a) between the surface support (1) and the

intermediate element (4), part (3b) between element (4) and the collar (6), part (3d) between collar (6) and collar (10), and part (3c) between collar (10) and the wellhead (2). Maloberti notes that "the portion of the hose between intermediate element (4) and the subsea floor is stretched." Col. 1, line 67-col.2, line 2. Since the tension necessary for this "stretch" is provided by the buoys of intermediate element (4), stretch occurs only in part (3b) of the hose (3).

In contrast to Maloberti, the hose of claim 1 is a flowline (16) that is located over the seabed (12) between the wellhead (10) and a joint end (17). The flowline (16) is elongated and the elongation is maintained in the flowline (16) by fixing the joint end (17) to the seabed. The flowline (16) of claim 1 is therefore equivalent to part (3c) of Maloberti's hose (3). However, as noted above, stretch occurs only in part (3b) of Maloberti's hose (3). As such, Maloberti does not disclose or otherwise suggest elongating a flowline and maintaining elongation in the flowline in accordance with claim 1.

Moreover, the joint end (17) of claim 1 is a connection point suitable for connecting the flowline (16) to the riser (18). Maloberti's hose (3) is continuous and does not include any connections between any of the parts of hose (3). Therefore, Maloberti does not disclose a flowline with a joint end suitable for connecting the flowline to the riser and fixing such joint end to the seabed to therewith maintain elongation in the flowline (16) as recited in claim 1. Maloberti does not suggest fixing the end of the flowline to the seabed, but rather permits the end of the flowline connected to the riser to rise and fall.

In the method of claim 2, displacement of the flowline (16) is permitted in the direction of the elongation while being prohibited in the opposite direction. In contrast, although Maloberti's hose part (3c) appears to be able to move in the direction of elongation of the flowline, Maloberti does not appear to prohibit displacement in the opposite direction.

In the method of claim 3, the flow line is guided in translation during elongation. Maloberti's hose part (3c) is held in place with flexible tie rods (11), which do not appear capable of guiding elongation in the hose part (3c) in the direction of elongation.

Claims 4-5 and 16 depend on claim 1 and are therefore patentable over Maloberti for the same reasons discussed above as well as on their own merits.

Claims 6 and 7 are system claims that include the similar features as those recited in corresponding method claims 1 and 2, and are also patentable for the same reasons noted above.

Claims 14-15 depend on claim 6 and are therefore patentable over Maloberti for the same reasons noted above as well as on their own merits.

**Claim Objections**

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 8-14 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

**Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing discussion, withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of the claims of the present application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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